

No shadow of proof has been or can be produced in behalf of any of them. They consist only of a string of infamous libels. In form they are in part libels upon individuals, upon Mr. Taft and upon Mr. Robinson, for instance. But they are in fact wholly, and in form partly, a libel upon the United States government. I do not believe we should concern ourselves with the particular individuals who wrote the lying and libelous editorials, articles from correspondents or articles in the news columns. The real offender is Mr. Joseph Pulitzer, editor and proprietor of the World. While the criminal offense of Mr. Pulitzer is, in form, a libel upon individuals, the grand injury done is the blackmailing the good name of the American people. It should not be left to a private citizen to sue Mr. Pulitzer for libel. He should be prosecuted for libel by the governmental authorities. In point of encourage-

ment of iniquity, in point of infamy, or wrong doing, there is nothing to choose between a public servant who betrays his trust, a public servant who is guilty of blackmail or theft, or final dishonesty of any kind, and a man guilty as Mr. Joseph Pulitzer has been guilty in this instance. It is, therefore, a high national duty to bring to justice this villifier of the American people; this man who wantonly and wickedly, and without shadow of justification, seeks to blacken the character of reputable private citizens, and convict the government of his country, in the eyes of the civilized world, of wrongdoing of the basest and foulest kind, when he has not one shadow of justification of any sort, or description for the charge he has made. The attorney general has under consideration the form in which the proceedings against Mr. Pulitzer shall be brought."

After referring to the various documents accompanying the message, including statements by former Attorney General Knox, who was the government's representative in the negotiations, and by William Nelson Cromwell, counsel for the new Panama Canal company, the president gives a complete history of the actions of the government in connection with the purchase of the canal property, and continues:

"Payment of the purchase price was thereupon made to the new Panama Canal company in accordance with the act of congress, and the property was conveyed by the company to the United States. It was no concern of the president, or of any officer of the executive department, to inquire as to what the new Panama Canal company did with the money which it received. As a matter of fact the new Panama Canal company did distribute the money between its shareholders and the shareholders of the preceding Panama Canal company, in accordance with the decree of a French court and the records of the French court show who were the shareholders who received the money, but that is no concern of ours.

"I call your attention to the accompanying statement as to the attempt to form an American company in 1890, for the purpose of taking over the property of the French company. This attempt proved abortive. There was no concealment in its efforts to put through this plan; its complete failure and abandonment being known to everyone.

"The Panama canal transaction was actually carried through, not by either the then secretary of state, Mr. John Hay, or the then secretary of war, Mr. Elihu Root, both of whom, however, were cognizant of all the essential features, but by the then attorney general, Mr. P. C. Knox, at present senator from Pennsylvania. I directed or approved every action and am responsible for all that was done in carrying out the will of congress, and the provisions of the law, enacted by congress, after exhaustive examination and discussion, were scrupulously complied with by the executive.

"The title to the Panama canal property was vested in the new Panama Canal company of France, which was the legal owner thereof, and the old or so-called De Lesseps company had a large equity therein. The title was not in a New Jersey company, nor in any other American company, nor did this government have any dealings with any American company throughout the affair.

"The action of the United States government was, of course, wholly uninfluenced by and had nothing whatever to do with any question as to who or who had not been security holders of either the new or the old company. Who such security holders were, was not our affair.

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